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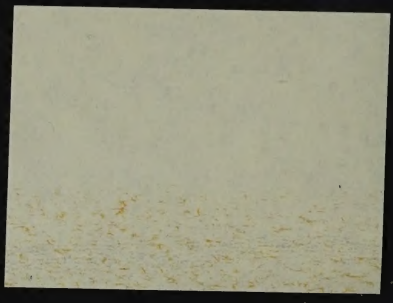

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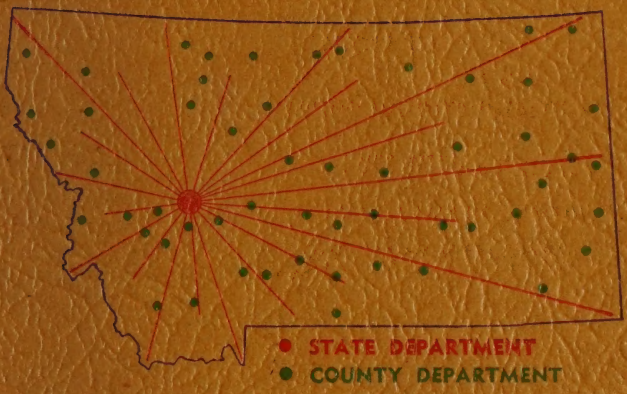
SIGHT CONSERVATION AND SERVICES FOR THE BLIND IN MONTANA



MONTANA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE
HELENA

SIGHT CONSERVATION AND SERVICES FOR THE BLIND IN MONTANA

The Montana Public Welfare Act and the Social Security Act make it possible to provide money payments to blind persons who do not have sufficient income or resources to supply them with the necessities of life. Services are available to the blind or partially sighted persons, and persons needing eye care. The purposes of the services are: prevention of blindness and conservation of sight, rehabilitation of the partially sighted and blind, provision of home industries and handicrafts for occupational thereapy and to add to income, and services to aid in adjustment of blindness.

The State Department of Public Welfare is responsible for the administration and supervision of all expenditures of federal and state funds allocated for money payments, rehabilitation, medical services and all related activities in the Services for the Blind.

The County Welfare Department is charged with the local administration of all welfare activities, which include the Aid to Needy Blind Program. This program must be administered in conformity with the Public Welfare Act and the policies, rules and regulations of the State Department.

Any person who is blind or whose sight is so defective as to prevent performance of ordinary activities for which eyesight is essential may apply for Aid to Needy Blind and/or Services for the Blind at the County Welfare Department in the County where he lives.

AID TO NEEDY BLIND

Definition

WHAT IS AID TO NEEDY BLIND?

It is a money payment granted monthly to blind persons who do not have sufficient income or resources to supply the necessities of life.

IS AID TO NEEDY BLIND A PENSION?

No. The amount of the payment is based on the needs of the individual and is adjusted whenever his needs change.

WHERE AND HOW TO APPLY

WHERE CAN AN APPLICATION BE MADE?

At the County Welfare Department, usually located at the Court House.

IS IT NECESSARY TO SIGN AN APPLICATION FORM?

Yes. This is required by the Montana Public Welfare Act.

MAY A CHILD APPLY?

Yes. However, the application must be signed by his parent or guardian.

IF AN APPLICATION IS NOT ACTED UPON PROMPTLY OR IS DENIED, AND THE APPLICANT IS DISSATISFIED, WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP?

An appeal for a Fair Hearing may be made in writing to the State Department of Public Welfare.

Eligibility Factors

IS THERE AN AGE REQUIREMENT?

No. Any blind person irrespective of age, may apply.

DOES A PERSON HAVE TO BE TOTALLY BLIND IN ORDER TO RECEIVE A MONEY PAYMENT?

No. If his vision is so defective that it prevents performance of ordinary activities for which eyesight is essential, he may be eligible.

WHO DETERMINES IF AN APPLICANT IS BLIND?

A physician skilled in the treatment of diseases of the eye.

HOW LONG DOES A PERSON HAVE TO LIVE IN MONTANA TO BE ELIBIBLE FOR AID TO NEEDY BLIND?

Five out of the last nine years, including the year immediately preceding the date of application.

MAY A PERSON TRANSFER OR DISPOSE OF PROPERTY OR OTHER RESOURCES IN ORDER TO MAKE HIMSELF ELIGIBLE FOR AID TO NEEDY BLIND?

No.

MAY A PERSON RECEIVE AN AID TO NEEDY BLIND GRANT AND OLD AGE ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS AT THE SAME TIME?

No. He may receive Services for the Blind while receiving old age assistance.

MAY A PERSON WORK AND RECEIVE AID TO NEEDY BLIND?

Yes. Blind persons are encouraged to become self-supporting thru rehabilitation, development of home industries, and other employment.

MAY A PERSON OWN HIS HOME AND BE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE AID TO NEEDY BLIND?

Yes. However, there are property limitations.

WHO DECIDES WHETHER OR NOT A PERSON IS ELIGIBLE FOR AID TO NEEDY BLIND PAYMENTS?

The County Welfare Department.

Payment

HOW IS THE AMOUNT OF THE PAYMENT DETERMINED?

By making a budget which includes the necessary requirements such as food, clothing, shelter, etc., less income and resources available.

WHAT ARE INCOME AND RESOURCES?

Wages, pensions, contributions from relatives, old age and survivors' benefits, unemployment or workmen's compensation payments, income from real or personal property and other resources.

WHY DO SOME PERSONS RECEIVE A LARGER PAYMENT THAN OTHERS?

Because of the difference in expenses and difference in income and resources available.

WHAT IS THE LARGEST PAYMENT A PERSON MAY RECEIVE?

One person may receive a monthly payment that will meet his requirements as determined by the county department, unless he is in a hospital or nursing home, in which case he may receive a maximum monthly payment of $75.00.

IS THE AMOUNT OF THE PAYMENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE?

Yes. The payment may be changed as often as there is an increase or decrease in need.

WHENEVER THERE IS A CHANGE IN A PERSON'S CIRCUMSTANCES, SHOULD HE NOTIFY THE COUNTY WELFARE DEPARTMENT?

Yes. The Public Welfare Act requires that a person who acquires property or income while he is receiving payments must immediately notify the County Welfare Department.

General Information

DOES A PERSON OWNING REAL PROPERTY HAVE TO TRANSFER IT TO THE COUNTY OR STATE?

No, but to receive assistance an applicant must execute an agreement acknowledging the assistance as a debt to be secured by a lien on real property held or acquired while a recipient of assistance.

MAY A PERSON RECEIVE TREATMENT TO PREVENT BLINDNESS OR TO RESTORE SIGHT?

Yes. Medical and surgical care are provided for persons who do not have resources to meet these expenses.

MAY A PERSON RECEIVE SERVICES WHILE HE IS RECEIVING A MONEY PAYMENT?

Yes.

IF A PAYMENT IS DECREASED OR DISCONTINUED AND A PERSON IS DISSATISFIED WITH THE DECISION, WHAT CAN HE DO ABOUT IT?

If a person is not satisfied with a decision made by the County Welfare Department, he may appeal to the State Welfare Depart-

ment for a Fair Hearing. A decision made by the State Welfare Department must be complied with by the County Welfare Department.

IF A PERSON IS FOUND INELIGIBLE OR HIS PAYMENT IS DISCONTINUED, MAY HE RE-APPLY?

Yes. He may re-apply at any time.

REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

WHAT IS VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION?

It is the process of assisting handicapped persons to become self-reliant, and gainfully employed on a suitable job, or as a housewife, or as a home industry worker.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION?

Any person residing in the state of Montana who is of employable age, and who has a visual handicap that prevents him/her from earning a suitable living or fulfilling the duties of a housewife.

HOW IS ELIGIBILITY DETERMINED?

1. A social study is made by a representative of the County Department to determine feasibility for services.
2. An eye examination and a general physical examination are made by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist and physician respectively, chosen by the applicant. The examinations are provided without cost to the applicant.

WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE?

Vocational Rehabilitation provides the following services as needed by each person:

1. Complete physical examination;
2. Necessary medical, surgical, psychiatric and hospital services to remove, reduce or arrest the visual or other disability;
3. Necessary prosthetic appliances, such as glasses, artificial eyes, contact lenses, etc.;
4. Individual job counseling and guidance, including selective testing and "tryouts" when advisable;
5. Training in a school, on the job, by correspondence, or by a tutor;
6. Maintenance, if necessary, during training;
7. Transportation, if necessary, during training;
8. Reader service, books and supplies as required;
9. Necessary tools, equipment and licenses;
10. Placement on the right job;
11. Follow-up to make sure the worker and the job are properly matched.

WHERE CAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BE OBTAINED?

An application may be filed at the County Welfare Department, usually located in the Court House.

WHAT ARE SOME JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE BLIND?

1. AGRICULTURE

   Poultry raising, farm laborer, livestock grower, wheat farmer.

2. TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

   Cab dispatcher, radio repairman, automo-

bile mechanic, telephone switchboard operator.

3. WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE

   Insurance agent, vending stand operator, wholesale candy dealer, grocer, house-to-house salesman, highway stand operator.

4. PUBLIC SERVICE

   Justice of the Peace, tax collector, caretaker, etc.

5. PROFESSIONS

   Teacher, lawyer, minister, masseur, home teacher, rehabilitation specialist, social worker, etc.

6. PERSONAL SERVICE

   Shoeshiner, hotel keeper, janitor, chambermaid, dishwasher, laundry worker, domestic services, etc.

7. CLERICAL

   Stock clerk, messenger, dictaphone operator, bill collector.

8. INDUSTRIAL

   Punch press operator, tapping machine operator, packing cans, furniture assembler, folding boxes, wrapping butter, upholsterer, film developer.

SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES FOR THE BLIND?

Any person, irrespective of economic status, who is blind or has impaired vision.

IS THERE AN AGE LIMITATION?

No. Any child or adult may receive Services for the Blind.

WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE?

1. Home visits to assist the blind in adjust-

ment problems and give help in the performance of home duties.

2. Aids in home teaching in typing and the reading and writing of Braille.

3. Assistance in securing appliances such as Braille materials, Braille watches and clocks, typewriters, hearing aids, dominoes, checkers, playing cards, etc.

4. Assistance in securing one-fare concession on railroad and bus lines. One-fare concession provides that a blind or visually handicapped person and guide or companion may travel on railroad and bus lines for a single fare.

5. Sending to the blind certificates of blindness which, when properly completed by physician or optometrist, entitles the blind person to an additional $600.00 exemption on income tax.

6. Lending and supervision of talking book machines and certification for talking books.

WHAT IS THE TALKING BOOK MACHINE?

The talking book machine is similar to the portable phonograph, which reads aloud to the blind by means of specially transcribed records on which are reproduced books in all fields of literature, science, history, as well as certain subjects on vocational training. There is no charge for the use of the machine and records.

HOW ARE THESE SERVICES SECURED?

Application is made to the County Welfare Department.

HOME INDUSTRY FOR THE BLIND

WHAT IS HOME INDUSTRY?

Any work that can be carried on successfully at home, including loom weaving of rugs and fabrics, leatherwork, broom making, mop manufacture, rubber mat assembly, basketry, chair caning, cabinet work, wood turning, poultry and rabbit raising, etc. The possibilities are limited only by the ability of each individual.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROGRAM?

1. To provide industrial home work in which a worker may engage primarily for monetary consideration;
2. To provide pastime work in which the worker may engage principally for the purpose of occupying idle moments and stimulating interest;
3. To provide a proving ground for individuals who may be reluctant or appear unsuitable to try more pretentious employment but who may, subsequently, prove employable in more active work done by the blind.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR HOME INDUSTRY TRAINING?

Any visually handicapped person regardless of economic status, who is residing in the state of Montana, may request Home Industry training and service.

WHO MAY RECEIVE HOME INDUSTRY TRAINING?

1. All persons who are mentally and physically capable, other than thru loss of vision of accepting training in the use of the hands, and

2. Have a genuine desire to develop an earning capacity or a pastime to fill idle moments and dispel boredom.

HOW IS TRAINING GIVEN?

1. In group craft classes held in local communities;
2. Enrollment at annual Summer School for the Adult Blind.

HOW MAY EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES BE SECURED?

By direct purchase by worker or thru arrangement with the State Department of Public Welfare.

WHAT IS THE MARKET FOR HOME INDUSTRY PRODUCTS?

The workers will develop their own market outlets.

REMEMBER

IT'S NOT WHAT A MAN HAS LOST, BUT WHAT HE HAS LEFT THAT'S IMPORTANT.

Additional information may be obtained at the County Welfare Department.

Published July 1948.
Revised September 1953.

REPORTER PRTG. & SUPPLY CO., BILLINGS, MONT.